



Lebanon Holds Its Election Against the Backdrop of the Country's Major Economic Crisis and Citizens' Growing Disillusion with Those in Power

Lebanon held its election this past Sunday against the backdrop of the country's major economic crisis and citizens' growing disillusion with those in power. The results saw Hezbollah and its political allies fall short of a parliamentary majority. Analysts have highlighted that this outcome is largely due to the growing dissatisfaction that the Lebanese people have with the government. Their lackluster performance in addressing the growing financial crisis the country faces, on top of accusations of mismanagement and corruption, have all attributed to this lack of faith in the ruling class. One of the glaring examples of the perceived governmental incompetency is the Beirut port explosion back in August of 2020, which killed more than 200 people and damaged a large area of the capital city. The troubling incident has been widely seen as a blatant case of failure by officials in power to effectively govern. While this most recent election did signal an evident discontent with continued corruption and negligence, it is still a long way from the massive government overhaul that many in Lebanon desire.

Hezbollah has enjoyed a majority since 2018. The Iranian-backed group is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and others. The militant wing is often used to project power in Lebanon. A growing concern among election experts and observers is that there was no party which came out as a clear winner in the election. This could lead to political deadlock in the parliament and delay legislation that is necessary to bring the country back from economic ruin. The International Monetary Fund and international donors have made their funds conditional on significant changes to both the political and economic practices of Lebanon. So far, none of these conditions have been met. This governmental paralysis will likely worsen as a result of the election. This is because neither of the two major political blocs have secured a majority. A noteworthy amount of those newly elected are independent candidates and this has offered some hopeful sentiment. Sami Atallah, the founding director of The Policy Initiative, a Lebanese-focused think tank, said "We have a mosaic-like Parliament, and the presence of the new faces is interesting because they can press for new ideas and stop harmful ones."

Despite Hezbollah and their allies losing a majority in the parliament, they still retain a large amount of power. Their militant wing does not answer to the parliament and can still affect policies. This makes it very unlikely that this new political composition will have any real change, but this is still an important step in fighting the rampant corruption and mismanagement that has plagued Lebanon.

The results of the election show a clear rejection of the ruling class. Unfortunately, this election was also marred by intimidation, campaign obstruction, and bribes. The fact that, even in the face of the multiple obstacles, members of the ruling class were voted out shows that the Lebanese people are hungry for change. This trend will likely continue and ultimately, it is hoped, bring about much-needed reforms. The danger does remain that if the ruling class is threatened, they will entirely dismantle the democratic system, as has been seen in other countries around the world. The growing trend of authoritarianism thinly veiled as democracy remains a threat, but it is still the hope of many experts and citizens that this will not take place in Lebanon.